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The Art of archery

Henri Gallice, Henry Walrond

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Collection of
Books on Archery

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ANNEX

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I Hellie's
With H Walrond's kind regards.

THE

ART OF ARCHERY

PUBLISHED, WITH NOTES, FROM A MANUSCRIPT
OF THE 15TH CENTURY.

BY

H. GALLICE.

Translated by H. WALROND.

REPRINTED FROM "THE ARCHER'S REGISTER," 1903.

LONDON:
HORACE COX,
WINDSOR HOUSE, BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.

1903.

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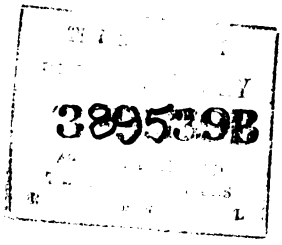

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NOTE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

[*The following translation is not printed without misgiving as the old provincial French terms used by the writer and the construction of some of the sentences are by no means clear, and the modern equivalents of some of the words are not identified even by French experts. I am much indebted to M. H. Gallice for the assistance he has given me in elucidating the meaning of several obscure passages and words, and also for the loan of the facsimile blocks of the remaining leaves of the only known printed copy of the book.*]

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PREFACE.

In a pamphlet which appeared in 1874, called "Un Livre perdu et un mot retrouvé," Dr. Desbarreaux-Bernard, of Toulouse, makes known the discovery made by him in a collection of papers printed in the 16th and 17th centuries, of the first and ast leaves of "l'Art d'Archerie," published at Paris by Michel Le Noir, probably about 1515. Michel Le Noir followed the trade of a bookseller and printer from 1492 to 1520. He was buried at Saint-Benoit on September 29 of the latter year.

I have a manuscript written on vellum of the end of the 15th century called "La Fachon de tirer de larc a main." On comparing it with the remaining fragments of "l'Art d'Archerie," I was pleased to find that it was the original of this lost book. I was fortunate enough to purchase this MS. from the Baron Pichon.

This discovery is the more interesting, since "l'Art d'Archerie" is the first printed book dealing specially with archery, Ascham's "Toxophilus or the Schole of Shooting" having been first printed in 1545.

I think it will be pleasing to lovers of archery that this anonymous book, the author of which, from the use of such local words as "fachon, commenchement, anchiens, amchoiz, adoulchissant, cherf, tierche," must have been a native of Picardy, where archery is still in great favour, should be published.

Thanks to the great kindness of my learned friend M. A. Claudin, I am able to give a photographic reproduction of the title page; contents, last leaf containing the colophon, and also the printer's

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device of Michel Le Noir, from the fragmentary portions of "l'Art d'Archerie," formerly in the possession of Dr. Desbarreaux-Bernard, and now in the library of the city of Toulouse.

It is a slight homage to the memory of him who has enabled me by his pamphlet to discover the original and complete text of the "Lost Book."

HENRI GALLICE.

July 8th, 1901.

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Lart darcherie.

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¶ Cy commence vng tresnoble et vtile traicte parlant de la maniere dapprẽdre a tirer a larc.

¶ La table de ce present liure.

¶ Et premierement pour cõgnoistre ou croist le bon boys de quoy on fait les arcs. chapitre premier.

¶ De la facon de faire les arcs. ceapitre.ii.

¶ Comment on doit faire les cornes des arcs. chapitre.iii.

¶ De la facon des cordes des arcs. cha.iiii.

¶ De la facon du traict cyre. chapitre.v.

¶ De la facon du trait cole. chapitre.vi.

¶ De la manie de mettre larc en corde. ch.vii

¶ De la facon des voletz a tirer au haultet au loing. chapitre.viii

¶ De la maniere de tirer de larc. chapitre.ix

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coups ⁊ ferõt aussi grant fausses cõme les autres mais se leur croisee si peut estẽdre ilz doiuent tirer de ladite mesure car ilz en sõt plꝰ beaux archiers. Et ose biẽ dire q̃l est impossible de tirer long trait de laide maniere sil est enfonce. Se vous voullez estre bõ archier. Vous deuez tirer en deux manieres. Lune aux buttes ⁊ soubz la toille ⁊ lautre aux chapperõs car on apprẽt mieulx a tirer soubz la toille q̃ en lautre facõ. Et affin q̃ vous sachiez cõment la toille doit estre mise ie le vous diray. La toille doit estre mise au trauers de la butte ⁊ au millieu ⁊ doit estre autãt de piez de hault cõme il y a de dix pas entre les deux buttes. Cõme sil y a cẽt pas elle doit estre de dix piez de hault ⁊ doit estre bordee ꝑ embas de clochettes a celles fin q̃ sil ny touchoit en tirãt q̃ la plume de la flesche quõ le sache a oyr sõner lesdictes clochettes et doit auoir ladite toille demye aulne de large du moĩs affin q̃ on puisse mieulx iuger de la verite. Et a tirer aux chapperõs on doit tirer des arcs rõds cõme iay declaire deuãt ⁊ doiuẽt estre lesditz chapperõs entre bons archiers de trois cent pas de lõg cõbien q̃ aultresfois iaye veu tirer a quatre cens pas mais il failloit que ce fussent bien exquis archiers.

¶ Prologue

Puis q̃ iay parle des quatre poĩs cõtenuz au ꝓlogue de ce p̃sẽt traictie. Je me puis biẽ taire quãt ie le cõmẽce ie nẽtẽdoie poĩt adire tout ce que est dit audit passe tẽps mais seullemẽt ce q̃ iay veu ⁊ sceu ꝑ les bõs archiers ⁊ aussy q̃ iay expedimẽte. Si prie a toceulx q̃ le lirõt q̃l leur plaise supplier les deffaultes q̃ y sont. Et se aulcũ bien y a ie prie au saulueur du monde qui luy plaise de leur dõner grace quilz sen puissent seruir a leur hõneur ⁊ prouffit. Amen.

¶ Explicit larcherie imprime par Michel le noir libraire iureen luniuersite de paris demourãt en la rue sainct Jaques a lenseigne de la rose blanche couronnee.

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LART DARCHERIE.

PROLOGUE.

Here follows a small and good treatise teaching how to shoot with the long bow (arc à main), written and composed by one who does not give his name, at the request of many who wish to learn.

That many young men, noble as well as others, willingly spend time shooting with the bow, I am not astonished.

We learn from the first book of the Bible that the bow has been in use since the beginning of the world, for in it we are told that Lamech slew beasts with it. Further on, David took a sign from it from Jonathan, as appears in the first book of Kings.* Again, as appears from his history, Hercules, the most mighty archer of his time, killed with it, while he was crossing the river, the giant who had robbed him of his wife. Also it was used by the archers who lived in the time of the Trojans. Similarly the book called "The Art of War," says that the ancients taught their children to shoot with the bow, hold it in the left hand, and draw it with the right, of which more hereafter.

Vegetius says that constant and persistent use of the bow is necessary even by skilled shots. Cato in his book speaks of how useful good archers are in battle. Claudius testifies that by his archers he several times overcame his enemies in battle, though they were few in number, and similar testimony is born by the gallant Scipio Africanus. Yet in no book which I have ever read, have I ever found anything about archery, except in the book of

* 1 Samuel c. xx., v. 20.

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Modus and Racio, which states that Sexmodus instructed his son, Tarquin, to shoot with a bow ; the said Tarquin being such a skilful archer that he never failed to hit, at thirty dextres,* an apple stuck on the top of a stake.

Inasmuch as owing to illness I have been obliged to abandon the said exercise, it is my fixed determination, as a pastime, to write down all I have learnt, so as to stir up those who are willing to learn. And, as the Philosopher says, the better the things known are, the more worthy are they to be loved and held dear.

True it is that archers have many times, during wars, prevented countries and kingdoms from being pillaged, and this not only in their own country. On the other hand, they have been the cause of other countries being conquered, as many great battles, both in this Kingdom and others, have been won by the archers.

There is therefore good and sufficient reason that these things should clearly be brought to the knowledge of men, and they will be divided into five principal parts, of which the first will speak of the bow, the second of the horns, the third of the string, the fourth of the arrows (trait), and the fifth and last, of how to shoot. And as I know that many take a pleasure in archery, I have resolved for my amusement, to write some things down. Not that I am not fully aware that there are many who know more about it than I do, and that it is unnecessary that I should speak Latin before monks, but solely because I wish that every one should become a good archer, begging that if there are faults they may be corrected, and that whatever may be found useful, may be taken in good part.

FIRST CHAPTER.

CONCERNING THE NATURE OF WOOD FOR MAKING BOWS.

As the first part of this treatise deals with the bow, you must know that there are three things in a bow, the wood, the shape, and the horns. First of all, bows can be made of any wood, but the best are of yew. Respecting this, Petrus de Crescens says,

* A "Dextre" equalled at Douai 8 feet, or 88 pouces. In the book of King Modus the distance is given as thirty "afours" (long paces).

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that yew is only useful for making bows and crossbows, and that there are two sorts of it, the white and the red. The white is called Portuguese yew, and it is usually soft and of open grain. And the more open the grain of a wood is, the softer it naturally is. On the other hand the redder yew is called Italian yew. This is found of straighter grain than any other, and has a sharper cast, and there is no comparison in the time it retains its strength. However, it is harder to work, and to string at first, and breaks more easily than the white Portuguese yew. Now if you want to know the best points of a bow, look at its sides and see if the grain is close and long, and if you find it so, you may be certain that that wood is very good and fitted for long distance shooting, which I shall hereafter, at the proper time and place, explain to you. Nevertheless, I have formerly seen very long shots made with bows of whitethorn and also of seshus,* but only for one shot, notwithstanding that whitethorn and seshus are of entirely different natures. But after one or two shots have been made they become more and more sluggish. The other bows, made of yew, are very good for butt shooting, as I shall show and explain at greater length in the next and following chapter.

SECOND CHAPTER.

OF THE MAKE OF HAND BOWS.

Bows are made of two patterns, that is to say, square and round, which are used for three kinds of shooting. The square are best for butt shooting for three reasons—first, because they have more back and therefore last longer; secondly, because the arrow lies better against their side, and thirdly, because they shoot straighter and keep their cast longer. A bow should be the same shape for the butt and target† shooting. Round bows are also made of two patterns for target and flight shooting.

* M. Gallice informs me he has been unable to trace what this word is, unless it is "cissus," which is given as "vigne vierge." In Spiers' dictionary it is translated as "wild vine."—H. W.

† Chapperon.

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Those made for target shooting have a broader back than the others, as more arrows are shot at it, for if they had too narrow a back, they would not last. Those made for flight shooting have narrower backs and are the better for it, as the back only makes them slower and more sluggish. Sexmodus speaking to his son Tarquin says—"If you wish your bow to last, its length should be that of two arrows and two small fists." But Sexmodus does not mean this to apply to bows used for flight shooting, as they should only be one hand's breadth, by which one holds them, longer than the said two arrows' lengths, and at the most only two or three arrows a day should be shot from them. And every bow should be stronger in the upper limb than in the lower for three reasons—the first is that one has two fingers under the arrow, and the hand by which it is held should properly be opposite the centre of the bow. The second reason is that all bows, which by their make bend, always shoot in the direction of their weakest limb, so that when the lower limb is the strongest (the arrow), jumps and shoots high, and farther. The third reason is that all men who wish to shoot far, must, to do so with the greatest advantage, shoot with the wind and high; but all the same, every one does not know this, and you must know that when a bow is strongest in the lower limb, it corrects this fault of itself. And a good bow should be very gradually reduced to within a palms-breadth of the ends, and then reduced to small size. For though the principal spring comes from the ends, it could not be good if it was not strengthened towards the centre. And every good and well made bow should be reduced as much as can safely be done near the horns. For the more tapered and gradually reduced a bow is from the centre to the top and bottom, the greater and sharper spring will it have, and in this there is no harm.

THIRD CHAPTER.

OF THE HORNS FOR BOWS.

Since I have spoken of the wood and make of bows, it is reasonable that I should say something about the horns. Generally, the horns of bows are made of cows' horn, the reason being that it

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is softer and less elastic than other horns are, and it is well suited for the square and round bows used for target shooting, as it is not too springy. But for flight shooting they are best when made from the tips of stags' horns, for the harder the horn, the greater spring it will give to the bow. And you must know that all horns should be fairly large where they fit on the bow, so as to keep the string away from the wood, and the shorter they are the better, as long as the bow can be strung. Some people have silver horns put on their bows, but I have found this neither useful or profitable, and I have tried both.

FOURTH CHAPTER.

OF BOW STRINGS.

In the second part of this book, which will treat of bow strings, you will be told of the number of ways in which strings should be made, and of what the best are made. Bow strings are made of raw green silk and of hemp. Strings made of silk are good for flight shooting for three reasons, as Sexmodus tells us. The first is, that silk is so strong that it lasts longer without breaking than any other material. The second is, that the string can be made as thin as may be desired. The third is, that when properly made the string is so springy that it propels the arrow further and with greater force than when made of any other material. The silk should be naturally green, and not burnt by dyeing, for it is spun green by silkworms. The other material of which strings are made is hemp, and this is of two kinds, male and female. The male is thick and coarse, and consequently is worthless for bow strings. The female sort is good, but it must be carefully picked and very well chosen. A good string should be gummed and not glued. The loop should be as small as possible, and well stretched with a stone weight (etendue fort a bonnes pierres de fais). And if you wish to know if a string is good, untwist the middle of it, and if the three strands are separate and distinct, it is a good one, provided always that when the string is twisted up again, it is hard and firm, for the harder it is, the better it will be.

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FIFTH CHAPTER.

OF THE SHAFT USED WITH THE BOW.

In order to do my work properly it is necessary that in this third part I should speak of the arrow, as in the first and second I have spoken of bows and strings.

You must know that there are only two sorts of shafts (trait), the glued and the waxed.* Waxed arrows are of two kinds, of which one is feathered with the front wing feather, and is only good for butt shooting, and the other which is feathered with the hinder wing feathers, and is both good and favourable for target shooting. And understand that a good round waxed arrow should be feathered from the wing of a swan, except those for flight shooting, of which I will speak later. Many arrows are made and feathered from the wing of the goose, but they are not so good, and are only fit for war arrows. Waxed arrows are also feathered with gerfaulcon's feathers, these are better, and fit and proper for flight shooting, but for no other purpose. But these should have very light iron heads, and they should be scarcely thicker than a flight arrow, and of the lightest and stiffest wood, as I shall explain hereafter.

If the head of the arrow is light, the feathers should be cut low and short, if it is heavy the feathers should be higher and longer. Arrows for butt and target shooting should have the barbs in the same direction as the nock, but for flight arrows there is no danger, as the heads of these should be round like horn ones.

The harder the silk is on the wax, the better the arrow will fly and the stiffer it will be. The wood of which arrows are made should not be much baked, especially for flight arrows, as if it is, the jar on hitting the ground breaks them. Every good arrow for butt or target shooting should be made of aspen (tranne), seasoned

* According as to whether the feathers were glued on, or fastened with waxed silk. M. Gallice informs me he has found in a dictionary, by Nicob (1616), "Tacle, tout trait collé, ferré, pour tirer de l'arc. Collé, *id est*, de qui les pennons sont colles, et non pas cirez."—H. W.

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by being kept a year or two, and without artificial heat. Flight arrows may be made of stiffer wood, such as birch or cherry.

Many arrows are made of ash, but they are only fit for proving armour. They should be large at the point and reduced at the feathers so as to stand the jar on impact.

Arrows are likewise made hollow, like balista arrows, and with a long head, but they are only used for holding a flight arrow to win bets, and are varnished above and below ; this is enough as regards waxed arrows.

In order to embarrass an adversary's choice, flight arrows are also made which look alike, though some are for shooting against the wind, and some with it, so that the chooser is not in fault if he loses when on the shooting ground.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

OF THE GLUED ARROW.

There are two sorts of glued arrows, sheaf* and flight. The sheaf arrows are usually thick, with high swan feathers, cut large, in the same shape as those of flight arrows, and have round iron heads. They are the regular arrows which the English use for butt and target shooting, for they find them, as they are, truer than any waxed arrow.

And if you would know what is a sheaf arrow, according to the English, every glued and iron-headed shaft, whether big or little, is called sheaf arrow.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

OF FLIGHT ARROWS.

Every flight arrow should be made of light and stiff wood.

The flight arrows made in this country are not so good as those made in England, because in this country we have not got the same wood as the English use for making good flight arrows, and for this reason there is no flight arrow so good as the English, for their wood is lighter and stiffer than any we have.

* Tacle.

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Every flight arrow should be feathered with pigeon or duck's feathers, and there is only one quill in each wing fit for the purpose, namely, the first. Properly speaking, a flight arrow is a slight arrow which flies further than any other small feathered arrow, and its head may be of horn or iron ; some have three feathers, some six, and others nine. Those with six feathers have the ordinary feathers, like those with three or more, and between them and the horn nocking have three lower feathers, and their heads must be light. Those with nine feathers have them between the higher feathers and the horn nocking, and the more feathers they have, the heavier must the heads be. And in truth they are only for show, as they are worth very little to shoot with. For the best are those with three feathers, and of these there are two sorts ; that is to say, the hollow and the solid. The hollow are bored from the head to within three finger's breadth of the feathers ; some fill them with lead, others with quicksilver, and these are the most advantageous. The others are solid, and are the most honest to shoot.

For the hollow are deemed dishonourable, owing to the advantage which they give, which is undiscoverable.*

These flight arrows have three small fingers' width of feathers close to the nock.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

OF PUTTING A STRING ON THE BOW.

I have told you of the make of the bow, of strings and arrows, but this neither could or would help you much if I did not tell you how to put a string on a bow. You must put the loop of the string in the nock of the upper horn, then stretch the string by pulling it along the bow, and at three fingers from the lower horn, make a running loop without a knot, taking as few turns as possible, as the fewer there are the better it will cast. To shoot properly a bow should be strung up a little less than half a foot. If it is reflexed or follows the string it must be adjusted accordingly,

* Laquelle on ne voit nie.

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for if reflexed it requires more, and if it follows the string less, stringing up.

NINTH CHAPTER.

OF THE WAY OF SHOOTING WITH A BOW.

As a book called "The Art of War" tells us, an archer who wishes to shoot in good style must attend to several points, both as respects his body and his feet. First of all his arrows must be on his right side, as his sword is on his left. He should poise his bow on the thumb of the hand with which he holds it when he shoots, and for butt shooting balance it exactly. If the bow is well made the upper limb will be the longest. While doing this, he should draw an arrow from his quiver in two motions, the reason being that unless he had a very long arm, the arrows would remain jammed in the quiver, from which the feathers would suffer. Then, holding the arrow by the middle, he must put it in the bow,* and there hold it between two fingers, and you must know that these two fingers are the first and second. And every good archer should, as I have said before, draw his bow with three fingers and to his right breast, as by doing so he can pull a longer arrow. The foot of the side on which he holds the bow should be in front of the other, the toe only touching the ground, so that when the heel is brought down (without moving the foot), the side may turn towards the butt, and give a good impetus to the arrow. As to drawing, it can be done in two ways; some draw with the bow hand raised, and some with it low down, and both are good in different ways. Drawing with the bow hand low is good for butt and target shooting, and is a more natural way of shooting than with the bow hand high, besides which it assists the loose, and also because the arm, not being raised so high, is, in case of necessity, less exposed.

You must know also that there are several ways of loosing, but all depending on two things—on the drawing hand, for one must have and hold the string on the second joint of the first finger,

* *i.e.*, nock it

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and on the first joint of the third, and on the step, of which there are three kinds, that is to say, with one, two, or three steps. The one step loose is done in two ways ; one is stepping forward with the foot of the bow hand side, and the other by bringing back the arm, pushing out the bow and arrow, and at the same time stepping back with the other foot ; this step straightens the arm, but it must be a long and sharp step back. The two other ways are by taking two steps and three steps. To shoot with two steps, a backward step must be taken with the hindermost foot, so that on bringing the front foot down, sufficient impetus is given to effect the loose. For the three step, the front foot is moved forward, then the bow is thrust forward as explained above, and the hinder foot is brought back in such a way that when the arrow is loosed one can step forward with the front foot.

According to custom a good archer should draw ten palms' breadths of arrow. There are many who draw more, but of those who draw more, there are many who shoot a weaker arrow by doing so. There are many good archers who don't draw so much, yet do not fail to make long shots and shoot as strong as the others, but if their reach is sufficient, they should pull the above-named length, for they would be finer archers by doing so. I venture to say that it is impossible to shoot a long arrow in an ungraceful way, if the bow is pushed forward.

If you wish to become a good archer you must practice in two ways, namely, at the butts under the screen, and at a target. For it is easier to learn to shoot by shooting under the screen, than in any other way, and in order that you should know how the screen is fixed, I will tell you. The screen should be placed across the range, half way between the butts, the bottom edge being one foot above the ground for every ten paces there is between the butts. Thus if the butts are one hundred paces apart, the screen would be ten feet high, and the bottom edge should have bells on it, so that even if the feather of the arrow should touch it, one may know it by hearing the bells ring. And the said screen should be at least half an aune in depth, so that no mistake may be made.

For target shooting, as I have already said, round bows should be used. For good archers the range should be three hundred

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paces. Nevertheless I have formerly seen shooting at four hundred paces, but it must be admitted that the archers were first-class ones (bons exquiz archiers).

THE CONCLUSION OF THIS TREATISE.

As I have written of the four points named in the prologue of this treatise, I may well stop. For when I began it, I did not intend to say all that there is to say concerning this pastime, but only what I have seen and known from good archers, and also the result of my own experience.

I beg all who read or hear read this treatise that they will kindly correct the mistakes, if there are any, and of their courtesy supplement my ignorance.

Explicit.

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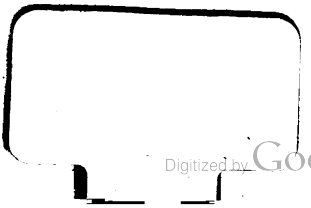

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